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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a process and an organizational structure in which Institutional Effectiveness (IE) can thrive. When such a system is implemented, continuous quality improvement can be sustained for the long term. Key concepts and philosophies found in the literature regarding continuous quality improvement and assessment in higher education are briefly discussed. Major factors, including competition in the academy, escalation of legislative accountability mandates, and the heightened focus on customer satisfaction, that have been influential in the increased prioritization and the polarization of institutional effectiveness are also introduced. The primary focus of this paper is the general structure implemented at a major metropolitan research university that supports ongoing assessment activities. The overall organizational structure used for implementing this process is described. In addition, a succinct explanation of the roles and responsibilities of key participants within the assessment organizational structure is presented for consideration. The paper also addresses ways to increase the practicality of sustaining accurate, complete, and thorough documentation of assessment efforts. (Author/SLD)

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Developing an Effective Assessment Process to Support Institutional Effectiveness Efforts

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Developing an Effective Assessment Process to Support Institutional Effectiveness Efforts

Abstract

This paper describes a process and an organizational structure in which Institutional Effectiveness (IE) can thrive. When such a system is implemented, continuous quality improvement can be sustained for the long-term. Key concepts and philosophies found in the literature regarding continuous quality improvement and assessment in higher education are briefly discussed. Major factors, including competition in the academy, escalation of legislative accountability mandates and the heightened focus on customer satisfaction, that have been influential in the increased prioritization and the polarization of institutional effectiveness are also introduced.

The primary focus of this paper is the general structure implemented at a major metropolitan research university that supports ongoing assessment activities. The overall organizational structure used for implementing this process is described. Additionally, a succinct explanation of the roles and responsibilities of key participants within the assessment organizational structure is presented for consideration. The paper also addresses ways to increase the practicality of sustaining accurate, complete, and thorough documentation of assessment efforts.

1.0 Introduction

The processes of establishing, measuring and reviewing academic programs' learning outcomes and administrative units' operational objectives are an integral part of the institution-wide institutional effectiveness process that supports the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) criteria for regional accreditation, as well as other accrediting bodies. While an intrinsic value of education lies in the love for teaching and learning, effectiveness in the preparation of students for successful careers is progressively becoming more important as a key measure of success within the higher education arena. The overwhelming expectation is that academia will prepare students to work, not only within academe, but will equip them with sufficient knowledge and skills that will enable them to perform in the business, technology, and service industries.

Ewell (1999) stated that authentic, creative and action-oriented assessment approaches are ignited by two key factors:

> a) taken from the proper value perspective, assessment constitutes a powerful tool for collective improvement that is highly consistent with core academic values and b) infusion of the logic of assessment directly into classroom and curricular settings is perhaps the most powerful means we have at our disposal to transform the logic of pedagogy itself—from one-way instruction to collaboration and partnership. (pg. 147)

Since the mid 1980s, many individuals in higher education questioned the need for a revitalized focus on quality in higher education and the applicability of quality concepts in the higher education system. The need to renew and strengthen the focus on quality stems from several sources. Lewis and Smith (1994) found that the reasons that were causing a change in attitude regarding the value of assessment included (1) reports and commentaries expressing distrust and dissatisfaction with the higher education system, (2) shifting trends of the student

body composition to older, married and working individuals, (3) increased competition stemming from the demands of students for value added education, (4) technological innovations and the reality of virtual campuses and (5) the reality of limited funding coupled with an expectation of accomplishing more.

Despite the fact that those individuals who are involved in teaching and students' learning believe that the quality of their educational product is evident without the requirement of conducting assessment, the most effective means for publicizing how well higher education is doing is to publish data that reflects what is actually being accomplished. Not only is this an effective response, it is becoming increasingly prevalent as a result of recent legislative laws that enforce accountability measures in order to receive public funding. Lewis and Smith (1994) contended that although academicians may not agree with the criticism, we achieve little by becoming defensive, closed minded and attacking. The more appropriate reaction is to embrace the philosophy of continuous quality, thereby enhancing the rich heritage of higher education.

Banta (1993) explained that the overarching concern in higher education relative to measuring and continuous quality improvement is whether lasting improvements can be made in higher education through the adaptation of techniques that seem to be working in industry. The dialogue centers on the viability of using principles of continuous quality improvement from industry to effect positive results in the higher education culture when the culture is so distinctly different.

According to Hubbard (1993) there are three quality concepts in terms of relevance for higher education that increases the chances for successful implementation of continuous quality improvement principles. The principles of parsimony (sharply focused goals, clear definitions of quality, fewer administrative layers, the distinction between the critical and the trivial), benchmarking (comparing against best practices) and customer satisfaction are essential to the quality movement.

Cornesky, McCool, Burns & Weber (1992) explained that as educators and higher education administrators, if we assume that everyone wants to do a good job, and that we work within processes and systems, then it naturally follows that our focus should be on continuously improving those processes and systems. If this is the commitment, then we can expect not only better quality results, but increased productivity as well.

Having adequate support for assessment and a process for quality assurance of the assessment process are two critical areas of concern. This paper describes how the University of Central Florida (UCF) has established a system to support their assessment activities. Section 2 introduces the components of an assessment process and section 3 discusses the essential participants in the assessment process and needed support functions. Documentation of the assessment plans and results is often a necessary time-consuming activity and section 4 describes the method currently employed by UCF. Section 5 contains concluding remarks.

2.0 Components of an Assessment Process

Assessment involves measuring outcomes and using those measurements to take actions to make improvements. The need to conduct assessment can come from a number of different sources, both internal and external to the university. Regional accreditation, program accreditation and program reviews all constitute some of the external drivers. Strategic planning and the desire to improve are internal drivers.

After a determination has been made that there is a need to implement an assessment initiative within an institution, the next step is to determine the scope of the effort. The scope involves considering who the key players will be, determining the assessment cycle (annual, every three years, etc.), determining the method of submission of assessment plans and results, devising the review process, documenting use of results, developing a system for archiving assessment activity, developing a system for recognizing successful assessment efforts and

maintaining the continual development and dynamic implementation of assessment policies and guidelines.

The University of Central Florida is a metropolitan research university that was established in 1963 and is located just outside Orlando. UCF has grown from 2,600 students to 36,000 students in 38 years and is currently classified as "Research Intensive." UCF has the second largest undergraduate enrollment in the State and employs approximately 1000 faculty and 3500 staff members. It has five colleges (Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Engineering and Computer Science, and Health and Public Affairs), and an Honor's College.

The assessment process was established at UCF in 1996 in response to "criticisms" from SACS. During the 1996-97 academic year, UCF adopted the Nichols model (Nichols, 1991 & 1995) as the institution-wide method for conducting and documenting the assessment of all academic programs and administrative units. At that time, each of the approximately 350 academic programs and administrative units developed mission statements, three to five objectives or learning outcomes, and at least two measurement approaches per objective or learning outcome. Over the following two years, each program established appropriate methods (surveys, standardized tests, etc.) for assessing the objectives or outcomes and began using the assessment results to make changes to academic programs and administrative operations.

Today, the mission, objectives and measures for all programs and units are published on the web at http://132.170.220.225/oeas/ for public access. The assessment plans and results for all of the programs undergo a thorough annual review by the Divisional Review Committee (DRC) in the colleges and divisions, followed by a final review by the University Assessment Committee (UAC). The UAC specifically checks to ensure that the mission and objectives are consistent with the mission of the institution, that the objectives support the mission, and that the measures will provide useful results to improve the programs. The Divisional Review

Committee and the UAC also review the results from the assessment process to ensure that the use of results to identify needed improvements is properly documented.

3.0 Essential Participants and Functions Supporting the Assessment Process

A key to the successful implementation of an assessment process is having an appropriate support organization. The critical players in this assessment process at UCF are the

- University Assessment Committee (UAC), Office of Operational Excellence & Assessment Support (OEAS), Divisional Review Committees (DRC), and
- Assessment coordinators for academic programs and directors of administrative units.

The integration of the roles of each of these major participants is vital to the attainment of institutional effectiveness and assessment goals. Following is a description of each primary function and the general composition of the organization.

3.1 The Role and Function of the University Assessment Committee (UAC)

The President of UCF established the University Assessment Committee in 1997 to provide quality assurance for UCF's institutional effectiveness process. The role of the University Assessment Committee is to foster and promote a university culture that values assessment and the benefits of continuous quality improvement. The UAC's function extends to enhancing the assessment process through the development of policy and guidelines for the institutional effectiveness initiative. The organization encourages assessment training and education, develops criteria for assessment plans and results, determines the submission cycle and schedule, plans and designs the review process, oversees the Divisional Review

Committees' work, provides technical expertise university-wide and reports to the President on an annual basis the state of institutional effectiveness and assessment.

The UAC 's charge to implement a meaningful review process entails ensuring that all final reviews of academic programs and administrative units are conducted by the committee, and that feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of plans and documentation of results are communicated in a timely manner to the appropriate individuals. The UAC also assists Academic Affairs in earmarking available funds for academic programs and administrative units wishing to implement effectiveness measures that the UAC believes to have merit, such as standardized testing. The committee also recommends names of faculty and staff to Academic Affairs to attend assessment conferences and institute, which is also underwritten by allocated funds.

The President appoints the UAC members to the university committee. The Chair of the UAC is a faculty member and is compensated through a reduction in other duties (e.g., a "course release") and a summer stipend. Other members serve on a voluntary basis as part of their service contribution to the university.

The UAC membership consists of one member in each of the following areas:

- Chair (faculty member)
- College of Arts & Sciences
- College of Business Administration
- College of Education
- College of Engineering & Computer Science
- College of Health & Public Affairs
- Administration & Finance
- Information Technologies and Resources
- Sponsored Research

- Student Development & Enrollment Services
- Academic Affairs
- University Relations
- President's DivisionIn general, the members from the colleges are Assistant or Associate Deans and the members from the administrative areas are leaders of assessment within their college or division.

3.2 The Role and Function of Operational Excellence & Assessment Support (OEAS)

The office of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support was established in March 2000 as part of UCF's reorganization of its Institutional Research function. The role of OEAS is to provide support to academic programs and administrative units in a broad range of activities. These activities include preparing for regional and program accreditation; coordinating assessment support; coordinating the development and administration of institutional level surveys; coordinating survey design and analysis for colleges, academic programs, administrative divisions and units; conducting process analyses; engaging in environmental scanning and conducting special studies.

Additionally, OEAS's role involves providing administrative support to the UAC by

1. maintaining the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) website,
2. coordinating assessment meetings,
3. preparing UAC meeting minutes,
4. maintaining assessment archives,
5. coordinating UAC level communication to the Divisional Review Committees, faculty and staff and
6. assisting the UAC in preparing annual institutional level assessment reports.

The assessment support staff members in the OEAS office conduct assessment clinics (office hours) and provide consultations with faculty and staff who need assistance with developing assessment plans for their programs and units. The office also provides workshops and training for larger groups. The survey support staff assists academic programs and administrative units in the design, implementation, and analysis of surveys to support their assessment efforts.

The OEAS staff includes a director, assistant director, survey and statistical studies coordinator, senior statistician, process analysis and special studies coordinator, administrative assistant, computer support specialist, secretary (part-time) and five graduate assistants. The office operates on an annual budget of approximately $500,000.

3.3 The Role and Function of the Divisional Review Committee (DRC)

Divisional Review Committees (DRCs) were established in Spring of 2001. The DRC members are appointed by the UAC with the full knowledge and concurrence of the dean of the college or the vice president of the administrative division. The purpose of each committee is to further advance assessment expectations of the university to faculty and academic administrators on a college and divisional level. This is typically accomplished by the DRC members on a more personal basis and with a less formal approach.

Members of the committee have the advantage of sharing the same culture of that of their colleagues, and consequently are in a more superior strategic position to impact the assessment process. Within their respective areas, DRC members have received training from OEAS and are adequately positioned to assist programs and units with the successful completion and submission of assessment plans, assist with the necessary revisions that may be required and assist with the appropriate documentation and revision of assessment results.

Additionally, the DRC members support the university and the UAC by conducting internal reviews of assessment plans and results within their college or division. At a minimum,

the DRCs utilize the UAC approved criteria in conducting all reviews. However, if additional criteria are developed at the college or divisional level, advance notice of the criteria is provided and sanctioned by the UAC.

For quality control purposes, the DRC is required to invite members of the Planning & Evaluation (an umbrella unit within the Academic Affairs division that includes OEAS) staff to attend meetings as observers or as active participants. At least one Planning & Evaluation staff member must participate in DRC meetings during which an actual review of assessment plans and results occur.

The nine divisional committees are made up of faculty members who are usually the assessment coordinators for one or more academic programs within the college and of administrators and staff who are responsible for developing assessment plans within the administrative divisions. These individuals have over time demonstrated their involvement in the assessment process and that they have a genuine interest in the institutional effectiveness and assessment effort. A UAC member or an appointed committee member chairs each divisional committee.

3.4 The Role and Function of Academic Program Assessment Coordinators

According to the SACS criteria,

> "educational activities of an institution include teaching, research and public service. Planning and evaluation for these activities must be systematic, broad based, interrelated and appropriate to the institution. The institution must define its expected educational results and describe its methods for analyzing the results.
>
> The institution must (1) establish a clearly defined purpose appropriate to collegiate education, (2) formulate educational goals consistent with the institution's purpose, (3) develop and implement procedures to evaluate the

extent to which these educational goals are being achieved and (4) use the results of these evaluations to improve educational programs, services and operations.

The evaluation of academic programs should involve gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate student achievement. Measures to evaluate academic programs and general education may include the following: evaluation of instructional delivery; adequacy of facilities and equipment; standardized tests; analysis of theses, portfolios, and recitals; completion rates; results of admissions tests for students applying to graduate or professional schools; job placement rates; results of licensing examinations; evaluations by employers; follow-up studies of alumni; and performance of student transfers at receiving institutions. The institution must evaluate its success with respect to student achievement in relation to purpose, including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates."

The academic colleges assign faculty to participate in the assessment initiative at the program level. The faculty that are assigned to the role of assessment coordinator for a specific academic program are required to collaborate with other faculty within that discipline to develop an assessment plan for submission to the UAC. The appointed assessment coordinator may be responsible for this task each year, or it may be a rotating assignment. The individual assigned to this task is expected to work with the DRC in order to fulfill university assessment requirements.

3.5 The Role and Function of Administrative Unit Directors

According to the SACS criteria,

> "in addition to providing evidence of planning and evaluation in its educational program, the institution must demonstrate planning and evaluation in its administrative and educational support services. For each administrative and educational support service unit, the institution must (1) establish a clearly defined purpose which support the institution's purpose and goals, (2) formulate goals which support the purpose of each unit, (3) Develop and implement procedures to evaluate the extent to which these goals are being achieved in each unit and (4) use the results of the evaluations to improve administrative and education support services.
>
> Each unit, in its planning and evaluation processes, should consider internal and external factors and develop assessment methods that will yield information useful to the planning processes of that unit."

In general, the directors of the various units within the administrative divisions are responsible for coordinating and developing the assessment plans for a specific unit. It is the responsibility of that individual to work with other staff within the unit to develop a workable assessment plan for submission to the UAC. The individual assigned to this task is expected to work with the DRC in order to fulfill university assessment requirements.

3.6 A Team Approach to Assessment Support

The University Assessment Committee, the office of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support, and the Divisional Review committee work collaboratively to results in an efficient submission and review process. These three entities provide three distinct services. They (1) assist academic programs and administrative units with the development of plans and results, (2) conduct thorough reviews of plans and results to provide important feedback to units and (3) assist units in the submission process using the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Website.

The assessment cycle is concurrent in that at any one given time there are three years under consideration. For example, within the 2001-2002 year, during summer through spring semesters, assessment is being conducted. In the spring semester 2002, assessment plans for 2002-2003 are submitted. This timeframe is considered Phase I of the cycle. Phase II occurs during the fall of the year (October – December). During this phase academic programs and administrative units report on assessment results from the previous assessment year (2000-2001). In the spring semester (February through March), academic programs and administrative units submit their assessment plans for the upcoming year. OEAS facilitates Assessment Clinics to provide necessary training and education in the development of plans. Then the Divisional Review Committees (DRC) and the UAC conduct their reviews. The DRC provides interim feedback to unit for necessary revisions and the UAC makes the final approval decisions based on the UAC representative's consensus recommendations. The following statuses are used: Approved, minor revisions/no resubmission required, minor revisions/resubmission required, Major Modifications/resubmission required.

OEAS communicates the UAC's final review status and pertinent feedback to academic programs and administrative units. Additionally, units via the IE Website can access review feedback. A formal summary letter is sent by OEAS to vice presidents and deans, announcing official UAC approval status of assessment plans. All assessment plans must be finalized and approved by June. Approved plans are made available on the IE Website.

During the fall semester, units submit assessment results from past year (e.g. In October 2002 units submit results from 2001-2002 year). The DRC, UAC and OEAS coordinate during the review process to provide feedback to units for necessary revisions. All reviews are completed by January of the following year. Unlike the assessment plans, assessment results are not made available to the general public through the IE website. The assessment process is specifically designed to encourage programs and units to measure and track their performance in order to find areas for improvement. It was determined that if the results were

made public, programs and units would be less inclined to measures outcomes where they may not look as good.

4.0 Documenting the Assessment Plans, Results and Reviews

The IE Website was developed in January 2002. Prior to the development of the website, UCF used a paper submission process for three years (1997-1999). At that time each program submitted a five-column table with the following five elements:

1. Mission statement
2. Objectives and outcomes
3. Measures
4. Results
5. Use of Results

These tables were submitted once a year and then reviewed by the UAC. The review process often came too late for the programs to make changes in their next plan. In 1999, UCF split the submission process into two phases: Phase 1: Submission (in the Spring semester) of the assessment plan for the upcoming year and Phase 2: Submission (in the Fall semester) of the documentation of the assessment results for the past year. At that time, WORD templates (which became the basis for the IE website) were also designed for the submission and review processes. Programs and units submitted their assessment plans and results as email attachments. The following pages include the Word templates that were used for electronic submission of assessment plans and results. The review forms that were used by OEAS, the Divisional Review Committee and the University Assessment Committee are also included in the following pages.

Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan Academic Programs—
Assessment Plan for Summer 2002, Fall 2002, and Spring 2003

"The evaluation of academic programs should involve gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate student achievement... Use the results of these evaluations to improve educational programs, services and operations." SACS 1998

Date Submitted: [Click here and type]
Program Name: [Click here and type]
Program IE Coordinator: [Click here and type]
Faculty Participating in IE Process: LAST NAMES OF PARTICIPATING FACULTY, SEPARATED BY COMMAS
CIP Code: [Click here and type]
HEGIS Code: [Click here and type]
Bachelors, Masters, PhD or other: [Click here and type]

Program Mission Statement (State the purpose, stakeholders, and primary functions of your program. Align mission with mission of UCF. Distinguish the unit from similar operations.) [Click here and type]	
Intended Outcomes or Objectives (Clearly relates to the mission, is important to the operation, includes target for each objective, is feasible to collect relevant data, is results oriented and is timebound.)	**Planned Procedures for Measuring Outcomes or Objectives 2001-2002 (ATTACH ALL ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS)** (Includes two measures when possible, approach is feasible, is appropriate, and subcomponents are measured. If a survey is used, type of sampe/census, convenience, point of service, random sample is indicated. Instruments are attached, and timeframe for measuring is indicated.)
1. [Click here and type]	1.a. [Click here and type] 1.b. [Click here and type] 1.c. [Click here and type] 1.d. [Click here and type]
2. [Click here and type]	2.a. [Click here and type] 2.b. [Click here and type] 2.c. [Click here and type] 2.d. [Click here and type]
3. [Click here and type]	3.a. [Click here and type] 3.b. [Click here and type] 3.c. [Click here and type]

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Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Results Academic Programs—
Assessment Results for 2000-2001

"The evaluation of academic programs should involve gathering and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrate student achievement... Use the results of these evaluations to improve educational programs, services and operations." SACS 1998

Date Submitted: [Click here and type]
Program Name: [Click here and type]
Program IE Coordinator: [Click here and type]
Faculty Participating in IE Process: LAST NAMES OF PARTICIPATING FACULTY, SEPARATED BY COMMAS
CIP Code: [Click here and type]
HEGIS Code: [Click here and type]
Bachelors, Masters, PhD or other: [Click here and type]

Column #4	Column #5
Measured Outcomes and Results (List each outcome measured during 2000-2001 and the results obtained. For each outcome, include timeframe of data collection, baselines for measures, if data are longitudinal describe trends, subscores, relevant subscores, how survey was distributed, if census or sample was used, targets of objective and if targets were met.)	**Planned Use of Results** (For each outcome, indicate how you plan to make use of the results during the upcoming year; what are your planned curricular changes, revised outcomes, new measurement approaches, deeper analysis, assessment process changes, etc. Also, provide a brief explanation of what you learned from this assessment)
Outcome #1 [Click here and type] Measures: [Click here and type] Results [Click here and type]	Use of Results [Click here and type]
Outcome #2 [Click here and type] Measures: [Click here and type] Results [Click here and type]	Use of Results [Click here and type]
Outcome #3 [Click here and type] Measures: [Click here and type] Results [Click here and type]	Use of Results [Click here and type]

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Assessment Year: **Outcome/Objective #:** **Review Date:**

Instructions: Please type/select, then press TAB to move forward through shaded fields. Press SHIFT+TAB to move backward through fields, or, click among fields. Upon completion, **Unprotect** form, spell check, then SAVE AS. After saving review, **Reprotect** form. This will refresh the form and ERASE ALL FIELDS!!!

ACADEMIC		ADMINISTRATIVE
COLLEGE:	PROGRAM:	DIVISION:
DEPARTMENT:	CHAIR:	UNIT:
DEGREE: TRACK? ☐ (X=YES)	CIP CODE: HEGIS CODE:	UNIT'S DIRECTOR:

MEASURED OUTCOMES AND RESULTS	PLANNED USE OF RESULTS
LEGEND: **S**: Satisfactory **N**: Not applicable **R**: Revision or explanation needed 1. **Indicates** relevant and accurate data values 2. **Indicates** timeframe **beginning and end dates of data collection** 3. **Indicates** baseline 4. **If data is** longitudinal, trend is shown 5. **Indicates relevant** sub scores 6. **Indicates** census or sample **used** 7. **Indicates** # of people in population surveyed 8. **Indicates** % of population that responded 9. **Indicates** objective/outcome's target 10. **Indicates** if target was met 11. Data links **to stated intended outcome/objective**	1. **Indicates and describes** curricular changes 2. **Indicates program/unit's** focus changed 3. **Indicates** revised objective/ intended outcome statement **based on collected data** 4. **Indicates** revised measurement instruments **based on data** 5. **Indicates plans to** conduct deeper analysis 6. **Describes other changes** 7. Described **what was learned** 8. Indicate **steps taken** to make changes **Comments:**

IMPLEMENTED CHANGES (1998-2001)	RECOMMENDATIONS (FOR INTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE USE ONLY)
1. Describes any **changes implemented** during past three years	Please **check only ONE box.** Internal Review Results: ☐ A: Acceptable as submitted to Divisional Review Committee ☐ B: Further revision or explanation at Divisional level with resubmission to UAC at a specified date ☐ C: Individual unit/program coordinator required to consult with UAC/OEAS (Do not enter below this line.) **(For UAC Official Use Only)** UAC Official Decision Date: ☐ Acceptable as submitted ☐ Further revision required ☐ Consultation with OEAS/UAC required **Comments:**

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College/Division	Review Date	Program/Unit
	mm/dd/yy	Click & Type Program/Unit Here
CIP Code: Click & Type Cip Code Here		HEGIS Code: Click & Type Hegis Code Here

Mission Statement	Outcomes/Objectives	Assessment Criteria & Procedures	UAC Recommendations
Please note: *"Checked" box indicates item is acceptable. Refer to comments below.*	***Please note:*** *"Checked" box indicates item is acceptable. Refer to comments below.*	***Please note:*** *"Checked" box indicates item is acceptable. Refer to comments below.*	***Please note:*** *"Checked" box indicates UAC recommendation. Refer to comments below.*
☐ 75 words	☐ 3-5 measurable objectives	☐ Two measures per objective (one measure is numerical/objective)	☐ Requires major revision and visit by UAC prior to revision
☐ Stakeholders	☐ Lists individual objectives	☐ Assessment instrument attached	☐ Requires revision and review by internal committee prior to resubmission
☐ States purpose	☐ Relates to the core mission	☐ Instrument appropriate and feasible for objective	☐ Requires minor explanation / revision prior to resubmission to UAC
☐ Primary functions	☐ States what unit will accomplish	☐ Sampling method is described.	☐ Approved
☐ Supports institution's mission	☐ Clients will think, know or do	☐ Sub-score ties back to components of service functions	**UAC Decision Date:**
Click & Type Comments Here	☐ Includes target (columns 2 or 3)	**Click & Type Comments Here**	**Click & Type UAC Decision Date Here**
	Click & Type Comments Here		**Click & Type Comments Here**

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Recently implemented IE website includes links for developing and submitting assessment plans, developing and submitting assessment results, reviewing the assessment plans and documentation of results of assessment plans, statistical reports on submission rates, and statuses on the official UAC review of assessment plans and results. In an effort to improve user friendliness and provide assessment support for specific colleges and administrative divisions, changes on the website are made on an ongoing basis. The IE Website has many advantages when compared to the hard copy and electronic submission. Some of the advantages for users include (1) ready access to past and current plans, (2) editing existing plans versus creating new plans, and (3) the ability to submit and resubmit with ease. For the UAC advantages include (1) an accurate database of academic programs and administrative units with contact information who are required to conduct assessment, (2) the capability to monitor the submission rate at any time, (3) a more efficient review process, (4) the ability to share approved submissions with the University community and (5) a more efficient archival system.Academic programs and administrative units are encouraged to use the IE Website at http://132.170.220.225/oeas/ for purposes of gathering information and directions on how to develop and submit viable assessment plans and appropriate, useable documentation of assessment results. However, for individuals who choose not to use the website to submit their plans, there is an option of submitting electronic documents via email. No programs or units chose this option.

4.1 Positive Results of Use of the Website for Assessment

The assessment database, which supports the web pages for the assessment submission process, yields useful data that will provide insight into the direction and trends of assessment for the University. Other capabilities include making the development of

assessment plans and reporting of results of assessment "best practices" available to those who have the responsibility for assessment. These "best practices" will provide examples of excellent learning outcomes (academic programs), objectives (administrative units), measurement approaches, data results, plans for use of the results and documentation of implementation of changes for improvement purposes. Additionally, the UAC will be better equipped to explore a reward system for programs and units that are committed to making improvements based on assessment by using available data. Overall, the level of openness and receptivity to the new website has been very positive.

4.2 Assessment and Website Challenges and Ideas

Although many positive consequences exist as a result of the use of the IE Website, challenges associated with the assessment process and the newly implemented website are still a reality. Some of these challenges include (1) faculty and administrators frustration with a new method of submission (i.e., the "learning curve"), (2) some faculty's dilemma with assessing learning outcomes because they view teaching as an art, (3) the perception that there is no benefit associated with the assessment process, (4) the assessment process is too much work, (5) a perceived lack of support from academic leaders, (6) a fear that the administration will use the results from the assessment process to evaluate programs or units, and (7) some differences in assessment philosophies between faculty and administrators.

There are a number of things that can be done to enhance the assessment culture. For example, the development of a reasonable and viable reward system and the provision of opportunities for faculty and administrators may make working on assessment a more attractive proposition. Integrating the assessment processes to support regional accreditation, program accreditation, strategic planning, and performance reviews would help to streamline the entire process. Coordination of data needs through one source and the use of the data and information collected for all types of assessment for multiple purposes are also strategies for

improving the assessment culture. The efficient administrations of surveys by integrating individual surveys into more comprehensive institutional level surveys that are conducted and analyzed at the institutional level help reduce the workload on the programs and units. The publication of assessment success stories could also lead to a more effective system.

5.0 Conclusion

The institutional effectiveness and assessment initiatives support the university's strategic direction of operational excellence and quality. The process that is currently in place at UCF is one that enhances both institutional effectiveness and assessment. Not only does the process enhance these two important initiatives, it is vital to the overall success of university as it strives to improve its programs and services.

The university's culture is progressively moving in the direction of appreciating the need to conduct assessment annually and realizing the importance of gathering meaningful data for improvement purposes. All of the steps within the assessment process (i.e., submission of assessment plans and results, and the review of assessment plans and results), the key organizations and participants (i.e., University Assessment Committee, Divisional Review Committees, Operation Excellence and Assessment Support office, and the Assessment Coordinators) and the functions of each of the groups (i.e., assist, train, and review) are essential to a smooth transition to a quality culture that operates at its highest level.

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